

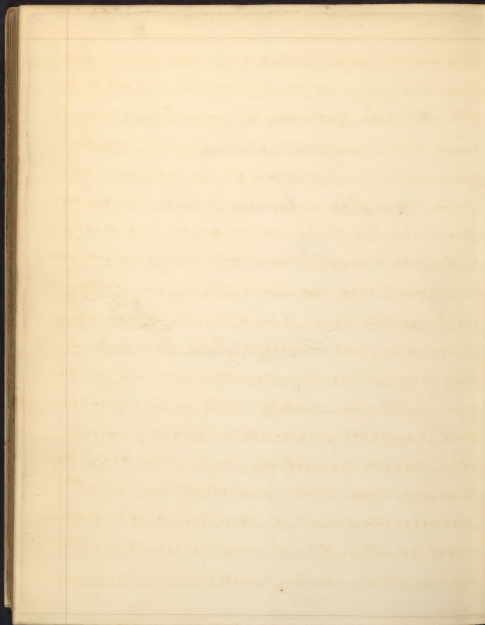
*Don Esjay on the medical  
properties.*

*Secale. <sup>of</sup> Cornutum  
by  
Manuel. Cyre. Robinson*

*Paped. March 23 1826*

The Chief or the Minister  
Proprietor  
Vice President  
General Secretary  
John. H. Hall Esq.

The history and properties of the sugar cane  
and interesting product of nature, has attracted  
the attention of Naturalists and Physicians  
more than two centuries, but for the regular  
consumption of the whole human race the  
formation of sugar cane and Molasses  
are indebted to our countryman, Dr. Thomas  
of Carolina. It is the first thing found  
in almost every eye field, though not the  
United States and more abundantly in many  
of the provinces of Europe. This substance is  
the production of a peculiar disease of the  
eye differing exactly both as to appearance  
and properties from its original grain.  
It is found projecting from the eye of the  
eye, but very moist grains are most  
favourable for its production, and it abounds  
more plentifully in rainy and cold  
seasons than in dry and warm weather.



The history and properties of this very singular and interesting product of nature, has attracted the attention of Naturalists and Physicians for more than two centuries; but for the regular introduction of the Scale Cornutum into the practice of Physic and Materia Medica we are indebted to our countryman Dr Stearns of Oneida County New York. It is found growing in almost every eye field throughout the United States and more abundantly in many of the provinces of Europe. This substance is the production of a peculiar disease of the eye differing widely both as to appearance and property from its original grain. It is found projecting from the ear of the eye. Low and moist grounds are most favourable for its production and it abounds more plentifully in very rainy and cold seasons than in dry and warm. The diseased



rye is of a purplish brown colour externally but internally white, it resembles in shape a cock's spur, from whence it derives the name - Ergot - from the French. It differs in length from one fourth to one and a half or even two inches, and is flattened on each side with a furrow or fissure running from one extremity to the other, its taste is acrid and pungent. On the continent of Europe and particularly France where it prevails extensively it has been productive of many epidemic diseases, especially the dry gangrene, spreading pestilence throughout vast districts of country; it is reported that in the year 1709 at the Hospital of Orleans in France five hundred patients were afflicted by disease in consequence of eating bread impregnated with the spurred rye. In the state of New Jersey in this country where much rye



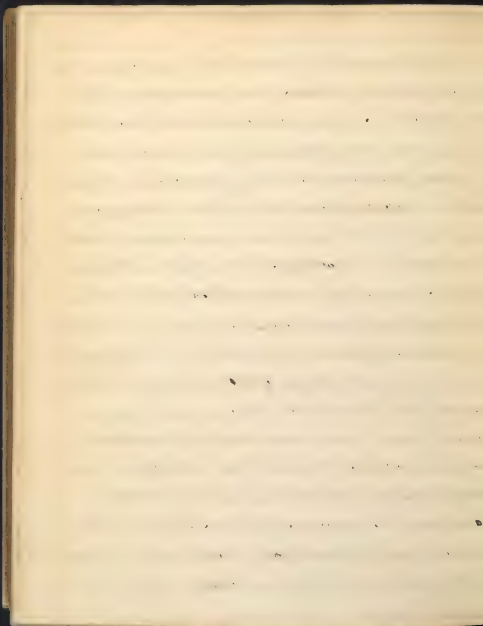


Bread is consumed, several cases of gangrene are attributed to the undue presence of the Ergot in the rye, - By Dr Hoewell, see Philadelphia Med. and Phys. Jour. Nov. No. 1825.

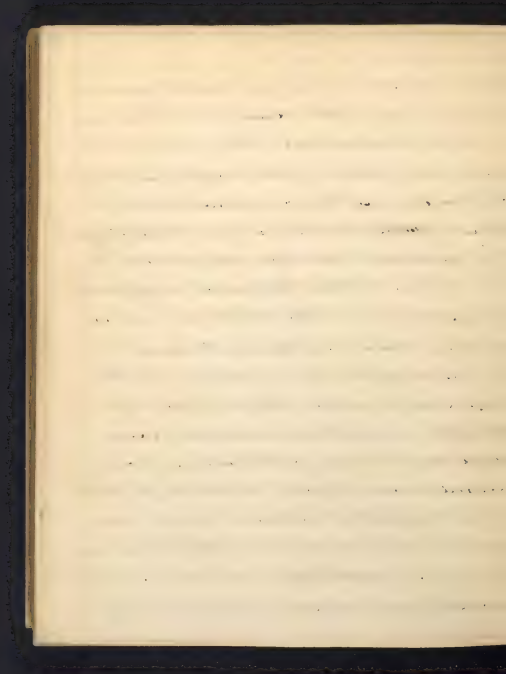
Although this article in large quantities is poisonous, it is no argument against its use in proper doses, for all poisons when properly regulated as regards quantity become medicinal - The ergot acts with great certainty, and a wonderful rapidity on the impregnated uterus, hence it is of great use in the treatment of parturient women. It has been asserted by some writers on this subject that its effects on the impregnated uterus, is not certain, but they I am inclined to doubt, the cases in which it has failed to produce an effect are to be attributed to the Practitioner neglecting to reduce vascular action before



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its employment. It is used in pregnancy previous  
to and during labour. It is advantageously  
employed in puerperal convulsions which  
require a speedy delivery. Ergot proves also  
of great service in cases of abortion attended  
with weak contractions of the uterus, and  
much flooding, and when ever there  
is much hemorrhage from the uterus,  
from want of contraction, also when  
labour has been lingering and protracted  
on account of debility. It is eminently useful  
in cases of flooding after delivery and to  
expel the placenta after an undue reten-  
tion. It has been said that it would be  
good practice to employ the ergot in  
every case of feet or knees presentation  
to avoid the danger of compressing the  
chord and to facilitate the speedy delivery  
of the child. Dr. Physick has cured an



Obstinate case of painful menstruation by the use of this drug. It also has been used in amenorrhoea. When we wish to expel the fetus by the employment of this medicine, there are some rules to be strictly ~~strictly~~ attended to before its exhibition, viz we should ascertain the position of the child. Whether the pelvis is sufficiently large to permit the child to pass, or if any other impediment exists. There should be a recession of the natural menses, the os uteri soft dilated or dilatable and the pains and contractions of the uterus have ceased, or are so feeble as not to be sufficient to expel the child. We should never exhibit it when the strength of the woman is much exhausted, for it acts in such a continued manner she might die

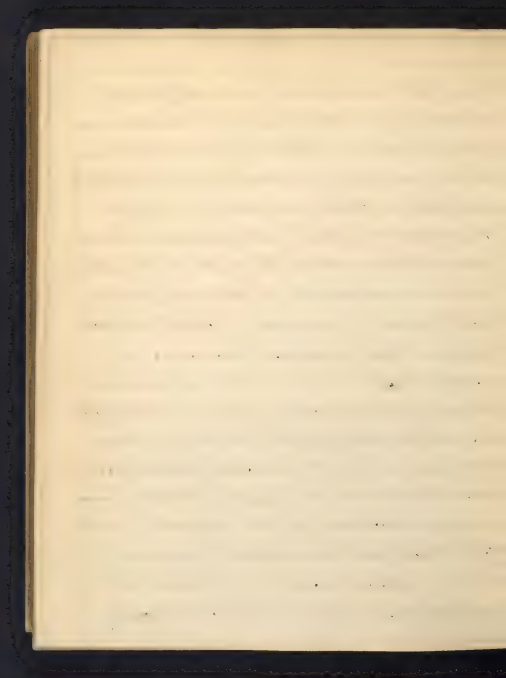


under its effects. Ergot may be given in  
powder or decoction; in powder the dose  
is from twenty to thirty grains, but  
I think the best form to administer it  
in pregnancy is the decoction, half an ounce  
boiled slowly for fifteen minutes in a  
pint of water - dose a wine glass full every  
ten minutes pro re nata. The symptoms it  
produces are almost immediate. <sup>patient</sup> The <sup>manifests</sup>  
an augmented sensibility her pains increase  
in force and frequency and in almost  
every case suffer but small intermissions  
until delivery is accomplished - Some  
Practitioners, and especially the continental  
ones will not use this substance in pregnancy,  
under a false opinion that it inevitably  
or nearly so produces the death of the  
child. To prove the contrary of this when  
properly and cautiously administered we





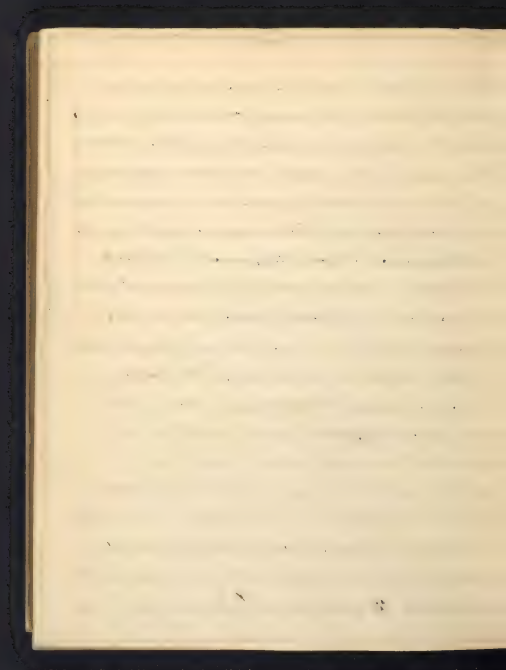
have the abundant and satisfactory evidence of many highly respectable and able Physicians, the danger to the child arises from its premature and ill timed exhibition. The manner in which ergot acts on the impregnated uterus has led to some dispute and adds another example of the conjecture and doubt of medical Philosophers as regards the *modus operandi* of medicines. In its rapid and immediate action, the advocates of sympathy find an additional confirmation of their doctrine while the humoral pathologists are obliged to summon all their aid in explanation of the singular property of this new medicine. I among many others have seen cases in which this medicine had scarcely



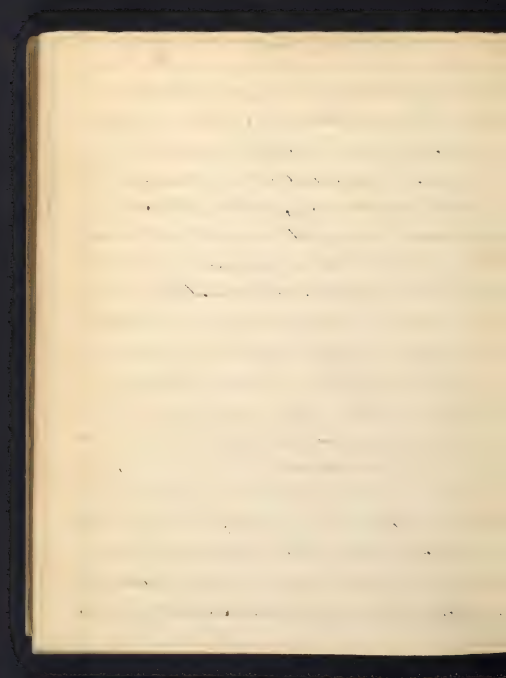
reached the stomach when the most violent contractions of the uterus were produced showing evidently that it was a matter of utter impossibility for it to pass through the lacteals and lymphatic, thence through the blood vessels and thus affect the uterus.



It is not only on the impregnated  
uterus, that the secale cornutum, display  
such happy, and useful effects. I believe  
it is one of the most valuable medicines  
in the materia medica in curing those  
regular agues, which occur during the  
autumnal months, and I think  
relapses are much less frequent after  
its exhibition than from the usual  
remedies. The use of it in this disease  
is not original with me, Dr Baker of  
Wilmington, Delaware, is the first  
who employed it and with the  
greatest success; and his opinion  
of its utility is fully confirmed  
by Dr Dutton of Delaware County,  
Pennsylvania, who published an  
account of it in the 8th volume of the  
medical Recorder = As soon as I was



apprised of the discovery, I took some pains to ascertain the fact by experiment, and am fully convinced of its value. I have used it in several cases I might say many, with almost universal success. In most instances it has acted like a charm and completely dethroned the disease. There are some cases in which it is inadmissible especially with females, in a state of pregnancy. Before its exhibition we should prepare the system for its reception by evacuating the alimentary canal by some active cathartic, or emetic, so as to free the system of the accumulations of bile or any other exciting cause; that nothing shall remain to keep up the periodical exacerbations except the habit acquired





by the system; it is in breaking up  
this chain of morbid action that  
the cryot displays its singular  
power, and efficacy. If vascular action  
or inflammatory diathesis is great, then  
bloodletting must be resorted to;  
there should be a complete apyrexia  
and in fine, where ever bark would  
be proper we may use the secale  
cornutum. The average dose for  
an adult afflicted with intermit-  
tent fever is thirty, or forty grains,  
divided into three powders, the  
first to be given two or three hours,  
before the paroxysm makes its appear-  
ance and let the last be taken,  
as soon as the first symptom of  
the expected chill makes its  
appearance. If the first trial of it



does not succeed, we must resort to it  
again at the next expected period,  
and <sup>make use of</sup> the same dose. It is sometimes  
advantageously combined with  
cream of Tartar, or magnesia,  
and where much irritability of  
the stomach prevails, some aroma-  
tic tincture or essential oil may be  
combined with it, vomiting may  
sometimes occur though not  
desirable, yet I have frequently observed  
the salutary power of the ergot when  
it has produced this effect.

